

Tia Palermo, Ph.D., MS

Email: tpalermo@policyresearchsolutions.com

Position: President and Head of Research

Based-Country: Buffalo, NY, USA

Country Experience: Bolivia, Chile, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mexico, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Tanzania, United States, Zambia



EXPERTISE

Dr. Palermo's work focuses on generating and synthesizing evidence, as well as facilitating the uptake of research findings to inform policy and practice. She specialises in social protection, cash transfers, food security, population health, and gender-based violence. Drawing on a strong background in impact evaluation, mixed methods research, and capacity building, she excels at translating complex data into actionable insights for policymakers and practitioners. Through her efforts, Dr. Palermo helps bridge the gap between evidence and decision-making, ensuring that programs are informed by the best available knowledge and ultimately improving outcomes for communities.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2021-Present

President, Policy Research Solutions (PRESTO) LLC, Buffalo, NY

- Manage all aspects of PRESTO's global operations.
- Translate complex data into actionable insights for policymakers and practitioners.
- Lead projects (sample projects below) commissioned by UN agencies and bilateral donors related to evidence generation and synthesis and translation of evidence. Topics include social protection, social and behavioral change, adolescent health, nutrition, gender-based violence, and well-being.
- Manage LTAs with World Food Programme on 1) Impact Evaluation and 2) Research on Social Protection.
- In a project commissioned by UNICEF, conducted narrative summaries of the literature on cash transfer impacts on poverty, health, education, gender equality, and other areas of well-being.
- Leading a research study to understand impacts of social protection on social cohesion in the Sahel in project commissioned by WFP.
- Led revisions to TRANSFORM social protection training modules to make them more gender-responsive and disability-inclusive.
- Co-leading a longitudinal, mixed-method impact evaluation of the Stawisha Maisha (Nourishing Life) cash plus intervention to improve child nutrition in Tanzania, together with national researchers, UNICEF, and the Tanzania Social Action Fund.
- Conducted evidence synthesis on cash transfers and cash plus programming for UNICEF.

2024 - Present

Research Associate Professor, [Department of Epidemiology and Environmental Health](#), University at Buffalo (State University of New York), Buffalo, NY

- Researcher with the [Transfer Project](#) on Social Protection in Africa, working closely with national governments, UNICEF, FAO, and local research partners.
- Mentoring students on PhD committees.
- Researcher with the [Intimate Partner Violence and Cash Transfer Collaborative](#)
- [GIRL Center](#) External Research Collaborator (competitively selected), Population Council (2022-2024).
- Mentor, American Institute for Research (AIR) [P3 Engage Mentoring Initiative](#)

2019-2024

Associate Professor, [Department of Epidemiology and Environmental Health](#), Division of Health Services Policy and Practice, University at Buffalo (State University of New York), Buffalo, NY

- Lead research examining impacts of social protection, including cash plus programming on gender-based violence, health, and well-being.
- Taught courses on data analysis, health services, and global health to graduate and undergraduate students.
- Mentored students on research in the 2PE Lab.
- Served on school-wide committee for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- Member of Cash Transfer and Intimate Partner Violence Research Collaborative.

2014-2019

Social Policy Manager (Social Protection), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), [UNICEF Office of Research-Innocenti](#), Florence, Italy

- Provided technical assistance to UNICEF country offices around evidence on social protection and child well-being.
- Secured funding and led Transfer Project impact evaluations of cash transfer programs on health, violence, and economic well-being through a range of RCT and quasi-experimental designs in various African countries.
- Supervised teams and contracts.
- Convened global experts on topics related to social protection and violence against children.
- Synthesized evidence for concrete recommendations for programs and policies.
- Presented research to non-researcher audiences, including Governments and UN staff members.

2010-2014

Assistant Professor, Stony Brook University (SUNY), Stony Brook, NY
[Program in Public Health](#); Department of Family, Population & Preventive Medicine.

Secured funding and led research examining impacts of social policies, including social protection, on gender-based violence, health and well-being. Taught courses on data analysis, research and evaluation.

2009-2010

Post-doctoral Fellow, City University of New York (CUNY) [Institute for Demographic Research](#) (CIDR), New York, NY

Projects included investigating the biological mechanisms connecting economic factors to health outcomes and the impact of health on human capital development.

2008-2009 **Research and Evaluation Associate, [Ipas](#)**, Chapel Hill, NC
Projects included operations research related to reducing maternal morbidity and mortality, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and design and analysis of household surveys for an international NGO. Provided M&E backstopping for Mexico, Central America, Bolivia, and Brazil. Supervised consultants, and liaised with country offices, Ministries of Health, and other partners. Traveled to Zambia, Nigeria, Mexico, and Bolivia to work with local partners.

CONSULTING (Selected 2020-Present)

2024 **Consultant, UNICEF Ghana, Accra, Ghana**
Summarized evidence from impact evaluations and peer-reviewed literature on Ghana's Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) and LEAP 1000 programmes to support advocacy efforts.

2024 **Consultant, Oxford Policy Management (OPM), United Kingdom**
Lead landscaping analysis to understand existing trainings and resources aimed at capacity building around gender/disability and social protection. Developed an outline for a new training on gender and social protection, informed by desk review and key informant interviews. Project commissioned by Social Protection Technical Assistance, Advice and Resources (STAAR) Facility.

2023 **Consultant, Social protection Technical Assistance, Advice and Resources (STAAR), through DAI Global UK Ltd, London, UK**
Conducted a rapid mapping exercise to understand and identify gaps in current efforts of global development agencies in collecting and analysing sex-disaggregated data in social protection.

2022-2023 **Consultant, Evaluation Office & Health Section, UNICEF, New York, NY**
Supported proposal development related to impact evaluations of shock-responsive social protection interventions. Led systematic review of combined economic and health strengthening interventions targeted to adolescents on HIV and risk factors.

2019-2022 **Consultant, UNICEF Office of Research – Innocenti, Florence, Italy**
Principal Investigator on Tanzania Adolescent Cash Plus (Ujana Salama) Study examining effects on gender-related outcomes; responsibilities include study oversight, participating in data collection training, analysis, writing, dissemination, and liaising with UN and Government partners.

EDUCATION

2009 Ph.D., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, *Public Policy*
Pre-doctoral trainee in Demography, Carolina Population Center

2005 M.S., University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, *Economics*

2002

B.A., State University of New York at Geneseo, *Economics and Spanish*
Magna Cum Laude

PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES (Selected out of 83 total)

Link to full list of Publications: <https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/y880kj6ml86oeyn1qox20/Tia-Palermo-Publications-February-2025.pdf?rlkey=jyu3eg9m2vuu0ex6giwjiv5bv&dl=0>

1. Waidler J, Prencipe L, Tirivayi JN, Mnyawami Lukongo T, Luchemba P, Eeataama F, Matafu J, **Palermo T.** (2025). Post-intervention gendered impacts and moderating factors of a government cash plus intervention for adolescents in Tanzania. *Social Science and Medicine – Population Health*, 29 (101760). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmph.2025.101760>
2. Cirillo C, **Palermo T**, Viola F. (2024). Non-contributory Social Protection and Adolescents in Lower- and Middle-Income Countries: A review of government programmes and impacts. *Oxford Development Studies* 52(2), 179–194. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13600818.2024.2376613>.
3. **Palermo T**, Logan-Greene P, Lima SM^G, Grooms K^G, Lillvis D. (2024). Systematic review of the impacts of US Social Safety Nets on child maltreatment. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 67(3): 444-454. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2024.05.019>
4. Kisliuk N, LaPointe S, Young SL, Prencipe L, Lukongo T, Luchemba P, **Palermo T**, On Behalf of the Tanzania Cash Plus Evaluation Team. (2024). Water insecurity is associated with intimate partner violence among female adolescents and youth but not males in rural Tanzania: A cross-sectional study. *Global Public health*, 19(1): 2409369. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2024.2409369>
5. LaPointe S, Mendola P, Lin S, Tian L, Bonell A, Adamba C, **Palermo T.** (2024). Impact of cash transfers on the association between prenatal exposures to high temperatures and low birthweight: retrospective analysis from the LEAP 1000 study. *BJOG: An International Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-0528.17761>
6. Maara J, Cirillo C, Prencipe L, Angeles G, Lima SG, **Palermo T.** (2023). Impacts of cash transfers on self-perceived stress in Africa: a multi-country study. *Social Science and Medicine – Population Health*. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S235282732300068X>
7. Ranganathan M, Quinones SG, **Palermo T**, Gilbert U, Kajula L, on behalf of the Tanzania Cash Plus Evaluation Team. (2022). Transactional sex among adolescent girls and young women enrolled in a cash plus intervention in rural Tanzania: a mixed-methods study. *J Int AIDS Soc*, 25: e26038. PMID: 36451279. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36451279/>
8. Otieno P, Quiñones S, Angeles G, Novignon J, van Halsema V, **Palermo T.** (2022). Health services availability and readiness moderate cash transfer impacts on health insurance

enrolment: Evidence from the LEAP 1000 cash transfer program in Ghana. *BMC Health Services Research*, 22:599. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-022-07964-w>

9. Barrington C, Peterman A, de Miliano M, Akaligaung A, **Palermo T**, Aborigo R. (2022). 'Poverty can break a home': Unpacking mechanisms and program design factors linking cash plus programming and intimate partner violence in Ghana. *Social Science & Medicine*, 292, 114521. PMID: 34750015. DOI: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114521
10. Mussa EC, Otchere, F, Vinci V, Reshad A, **Palermo T**, on behalf of the ISNP Evaluation Team. (2021). Linking poverty-targeted social protection and Community Based Health Insurance in Ethiopia: Enrolment, linkages, and gaps. *Social Science & Medicine*, 286: 114312. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2021.114312>
11. **Palermo T**, Prencipe L, Kajula L, on behalf of the Tanzania Cash Plus Evaluation Team. (2021). "Government implemented cash plus model reduces violence experiences and perpetration among adolescents in Tanzania." *American Journal of Public Health*, 111(12): 2227-2238. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2021.306509>
12. Prencipe L, Houweling TAJ, van Lenthe F, **Palermo T**, on behalf of the PSSN evaluation team. (2021). "Do Conditional Cash Transfers Improve Mental Health? Evidence From Tanzania's Governmental Social Protection Program." *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 69(5): 797-805. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1054139X21002305>
13. Handa S, Daidone S, Peterman A, Davis B, Pereira A, **Palermo T**, Yablonski J. (2018). "Myth-busting? Confronting Six Common Perceptions about Unconditional Cash as a Poverty Reduction Strategy." *World Bank Research Observer*, 33(2): 259-298. <https://academic.oup.com/wbro/article/33/2/259/5127165>
14. Peterman A, Neijhoft AN, Cook S, **Palermo T**. (2017). Understanding the linkages between social protection and childhood violence: A review of the evidence. *Health Policy and Planning* 32(7): 1049-1071. [doi:10.1093/heapol/czx033](https://doi.org/10.1093/heapol/czx033)

INVITED PRESENTATIONS (SELECTED 2023-Present)

June 5, 2025	Myth v. Reality: Dispelling myths on gender and cash transfers. Socialprotection.org webinar series, hosted by UNICEF and PRESTO. Panelist.
January 28, 2025	"Cash Transfers and Intimate Partner Violence: Past, current and future research." Panelist for Emerging Evidence on Gender-Responsive Social Protection Panel at the Social Protection Interagency Cooperation Board (SPIAC-B) Gender Working Group Event on Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Social Protection. Lusaka, Zambia.
October 10, 2024	"Making the connection: social protection, human capital development, and economic development." Social Protection Conference . Hosted by Ministry of Local Government. Co-sponsors: FCDO, Sida. Kigali, Rwanda.

- September 10, 2024 “Social Assistance for Adolescent Girls: What we Know.” Panelist for “How can social protection enhance adolescent girls’ agency and wellbeing?” Power4Girls Expert Series, UNICEF. New York, NY.
- April 18, 2024 Panelist for “[TRANSFORM: Towards Gender-Responsive and Disability-inclusive Social Protection Systems in Africa](#).” Hosted by socialprotection.org.
- January 10, 2024 “Myth-busting the effects of cash transfers on human behavior in development aid.” Presentation (co-presented with Sudhanshu Handa) to the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Behavioral Insights Network, Hague, Netherlands (virtual).
- December 5, 2023 “Gender and Social Protection.” Social Protection Panel, World Food Programme Impact Evaluation Forum, Rome, Italy, December 5, 2023.

OTHER INFORMATION

- Citizenship: USA
- Computer: Stata, EndNote, Zotero, Mac, PC
- Languages: English (Native), Spanish (Professional fluency), Italian (Intermediate), French (Basic), Portuguese (Basic)